1: Fitzgerald H-5 (1937-1938) AE3 Sino-Tibetan
Border Peoples AE3

domestic tasks. The courtyard is the real centre of the family life, where everything from the baby's toilet to the ceremonies of Ancestor Worship takes place.

Labour is cheap in Yunnan, but strangely enough even the wealthiest families have hardly any servants. The women of the family, especially the daughters-in-law and unmarried girls do the house work, cook, sweep the courtyard, and wait at table on the men, except when guests are invited. Then the young sons do the waiting at table, such as there is. Even the richest families rarely have more than one servant, to feed pigs and do the roughest work, and she is always a "*ya t'ou*," that is to say a slave girl. This system, which resembles the Mui Tsai of south China, but is hardly found in north China at all, is less practised by the Min Chia than in other parts of Yunnan, notably K'un Ming, where almost the only servants obtainable are slave girls. Slave girls are almost invariably cretinous or dwarfed individuals, who, coming from the poor families where goitre and the consequent cretinism is common, are too deformed, stupid, and unattractive to be married. For it must be remembered that a man has to pay for his bride, and few are willing to marry a cretinous dwarf. Such girls are therefore sold by their parents to the wealthy families as slaves, for life, although it is customary to give them some small remuneration, and if possible, to find them a husband when they are adult. Among the Min Chia of the Ta Li plain, where goitre and cretinism are less prevalent than in the mountain valleys, only a small number of the richer families have slave girls, and perhaps because Min Chia women are more independent in character than the other peoples of Yunnan, the slaves in Ta Li are on the whole much better treated than, for example, they are in K'un Ming. On the other hand the fact that all servants are slave girls, and the independent character of the Min

1: Fitzgerald H-5 (1937-1938) AE3 Sino-Tibetan
Border Peoples AE3

732 Chia women, make it quite impossible to obtain normal
357 girls as domestic servants for wages. A rich family may
567 thus be able and willing to pay wages and hire servants, but none can be found, except slaves, who are too stupid to do more than the crudest tasks.

517 In Ta Li, where there are no regular theatres playing at
574 all times, the principal recreation and entertainment of the
252 well to do is feasting. Every family gives parties at frequent intervals, and the male members are constantly being invited out to the homes of their friends and relatives. Women also go out to feasts, but more rarely, on important occasions such as a marriage, the birth of an heir, or the anniversary of some important relative. In most parts of China it is customary for the men to entertain their guests at a restaurant, but in Ta Li, where the only restaurants are the rather simple places catering for travellers, feasts are always given in the home. In certain cases where the family is a small one, and the kitchen not adequate, the food is sent in from a restaurant, but in the larger houses it is prepared by the women of the household themselves. As they do not sit down with the men and guests, they have plenty of time to cook the elaborate dishes served on these occasions.

574 The meal is served in the guest room, which as has been pointed out, is also the only sitting room in the house. Guests are invited for four or five in the afternoon, but no one arrives until at least half an hour, or more usually an hour, after the time named. The invitation card is sent round the day before with all the names of those to be invited written on it. In this way a guest can see who he is going to meet, and can avoid someone he dislikes by declining the invitation. This admirable custom might with advantage be adopted elsewhere. Eight, or at the outside ten, can find room at the round tables used for Min Chia feasts, and unless the party is a celebration for some important occasion, not